

# When Do We Go Back to Normal?

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<https://faulibrarydean.wordpress.com/2020/05/01/when-do-we-go-back-to-normal/>



All of us who have been living through the COVID19 pandemic are anxious to get “back to normal.” The FAU library faculty, staff, and I have been working remotely since March 19, 2020. We are finding new ways to connect with FAU’s students and faculty –and with each other. We have discovered new founts of creativity and have become a strong support network for each other and for the people we serve.

We’ve done videos, such as this week’s video to [wish our students success during finals](#) . We’ve run contests and virtual events to engage with our students.

## NATIONAL POETRY MONTH CONTEST



We've developed resources for our community to help them cope, such as our our Home Schooling Guide or our [COVID19 guide](#), complete with a page just focused on making your own face mask.



As creative as we have been and as we will continue to be, we miss you as much as you miss coming to the Libraries! You are our lifeblood, our soul, our reason for being!



This week I held my first virtual “meet and greet” with students and faculty so I could hear what their issues and concerns are and just talk about what we’re all going through. We connected using WebEx and had some great conversation. Two questions were on everyone’s mind: when will the University and the libraries reopen? And, when we do reopen, how will we keep everyone safe?

As we ponder reopening the University and the Libraries, we are all guided first and foremost by concern for the safety of our students, faculty, and staff. The Libraries have developed a [COVID19 guide](#) that links to state, CDC, and other authoritative sources to help everyone stay well informed. The University is guided by federal guidelines, as well as directives from the State Board of Governors and local authorities. In mid April, Florida’s Governor appointed the [Chair of the State Board of Governors to the Re-Open Florida Task Force](#), Syd Kitson, to the Executive Committee of the Re-Open Florida Task Force.

As we plan for an eventual reopening after face-to-face classes resume, we have to be flexible on what normal means. And we also have to be careful not to let our desire for normalcy lead us to come back too soon, without precautions, and put everyone at risk.

The University of Florida, located in one of the Florida counties with a very low number of cases of the virus, [has nevertheless laid out a very cautious approach to reopening](#). We who are located in south Florida, which has much higher numbers of infection, will have to be even more cautious moving forward.

A [recent article reporting on research conducted at FAU and elsewhere](#) urges caution, noting that the standard six feet for social distancing may not be enough. “Engineers at Florida Atlantic University imitated a cough in a lab for research. In that test, scientists used a laser to measure how far droplets traveled. In 41 seconds, the vapor from the “heavy cough” reached 9 feet. Other tests that were conducted reached as far as 12 feet. Dr. Sid Verma suggested that if someone sees another person cough in public, to avoid the area for several minutes. Research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association reported that the droplets from the coughs can travel up to 23 to 27 feet.”

So, what does this mean in practical terms? FAU has convened an Emergency Operations Team with broad participation across the University and relying heavily on experts from the College of Medicine, the College of Nursing, and other public health experts to lay out what a return to normal might look like and determine how and when it will be safe. The Colleges, the Libraries, the Student Union, and others are planning for what changes need to be made in the short, medium, and long-term for reopening.

The FAU Libraries face some unique challenges in a post-COVID world. Our facilities were designed for maximum, high-intensity use. From September 2019 to February 2020, we had more than 480,000 visits to the Wimberly Library in Boca. If we come back in phases, where we restrict access to a space to no more than ten people at a time in the very first phase, what do we do to implement that? We have always taken immense pride in how busy we are. But in the short term, we may have to implement measures that restrict the number of people who can be in our spaces at any given time.



“Normal” will be different in the short term and into the fall semester and we will need everyone’s help as we reopen gradually to make sure that everyone is safe.

We want to make sure you understand how eager we are to get back to the “normal.” But we also want your help in the first few months. We will need your support, your patience, and your focus on the long-term so that when we come back everyone is safe. The good news is that we have learned a lot about helping people who are not right in front of us. I do believe that, with your help, we will be better and stronger than we were before.

Go Owls!